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A D D R E S S

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IN THE

LIVERPOOL COLLEGE,

DEC^R. 21, 1872.

BY THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE,

FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND ILLUSTRATIVE PASSAGES.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1873.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET,
AND CHARING CROSS.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN taking so grave a step as to animadvert strongly on the published opinions of men of eminence and character, I think it my duty to show, by a few citations of their own words, where the original is English, and in the case of Dr. Strauss, by a few translated extracts, that I do not deal in merely vague accusations, and that I have not overstated the gravity of the case.

And by way of commencement, in order to show the change in the tone of the public, or the speculative mind during the last forty years, and to supply a measure of the distance over or down which we have travelled within that period, I will quote a passage from a competent and well-informed writer. In the 'Christian Advocate's' publication for 1829, Mr. Hugh James Rose, who then held the office at Cambridge, when giving his reason for a partial deviation from the usual course in the choice of his subject, observes as follows :—

“As far as I have been able to collect, no persons have stood forward, very recently, as the *avowed* opponents of Christianity, whose characters or whose works give them any claim to consideration or reply.”*

Dr. Whewell's Bridgwater Treatise on Astronomy and Physics was published in 1834; and the whole of that series, given to the world about the same date, seemed to be a public proclamation of the established harmony between Science and Religion.

* Advertisement to Rose's 'Christianity Always Progressive' (London 1829).

Neither of the Universities had, as far as I know, been disturbed for a great length of time by any controversy affecting the foundations of belief. Dean Milman's 'History of the Jews,' which appeared about 1830, was attacked with severity, perhaps almost ferocity, by Dr. Faussett, then the Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford. The same work was republished, with a preface fully maintaining its propositions, in 1863. Those, who read it now, will find some assistance towards estimating the change in our position, from observing the slighness of the cause which then sufficed to produce an excitement not inconsiderable.

I must add that for twenty years, or thereabouts, from that time, according to my observation, belief was everywhere, to all appearance, progressively extended and confirmed. Perhaps the first note of the coming assault was the publication of the work entitled 'Vestiges of Creation.' It obtained a wide circulation; but in general society it was almost universally condemned. I here purposely confine my references to the works of men anonymous or dead. The difference of times became observable, when the fatalistic book of Mr. Buckle, notwithstanding its ungainly form and the portentous width of its plan, became a favourite even in drawing-rooms and in boudoirs. But the spirit of class with us enters into these matters among others; and while unbelief well printed, well bound, and well ushered into the world—in a word, unbelief in broadcloth—seems to be held perfectly "respectable," unbelief in fustian is still almost savagely condemned.

I wish to add that the aim of my Address is not to preach pessimism, but to point to a specific evil for a specific purpose. And that purpose is to warn, I will not say to prepare—for that is a much larger matter—the minds of those who heard it, against that which they cannot fail to meet with, warned or unwarned. I named accordingly one

or two of the seductive (I am almost tempted to call them cant) phrases of the day, and some of the thoroughly unsound intellectual habits which, it is strange to say, are more or less tolerated among those sometimes described as the thinkers of the age, sometimes by other favourite and not less imposing titles. I am aware that many objections may be taken to my having touched the subject. One of those I should feel the most lies against the necessarily crabbed and partial nature of my reference to such parts of it as I have named. Besides, there are other heads which I should have wished to touch, and among them the strange assumption that, because God is infinite, the finite mind of man can have no points of true contact with Him; and the grossly fallacious character (as I believe) of the assumption that not only for individuals but for generations, and in the long-run of human history, Christian morality, or the morality which has hitherto been considered Christian, can be separated from Christian dogma, and can permanently survive its abandonment.

I wish to place on record my conviction that belief cannot now be defended by reticence, any more than by railing, or by any privileges and assumptions. Nor, again, can it be defended exclusively by its "standing army"—by priests and ministers of religion. To them, I do not doubt, will fall the chief share of the burden, and of the honour, and of the victory. But we commit a fatal error if we allow this to become a merely professional question. It is the affair of all.

It is very difficult in handling such controversies to avoid the tone of assumption and denunciation. I desire, therefore, once for all, to abjure all imputations against motives or characters. Equal credit for the love of truth should be allowed by all to all, and the endeavour made, or at least intended, to unite plain speaking with personal respect.

Yet this, though an obvious is not an easy duty ; for it is impossible to view certain states of mind as other than the results of strong, though honest, self-delusion.

This duty of personal respect is especially due at a time, when the writers against Christian belief stand in a moral position so different from that of its principal French assailants during the last century. The combat is not now with the authors of the 'Pucelle' and the 'Confessions;' but with men who, though they believe less than Voltaire and Rousseau, yet either revere or sympathise more ; who for the most part seek to avoid hard language ; who commonly confess not only that Christianity has done good, but even that it may still confer at least some relative benefit before the day of perfect preparedness for its removal shall arrive, and even the most "advanced" of whom, like the author of the 'Martyrdom of Man,' appears to be touched by a lingering sentiment of tenderness, while he blows his trumpet for a final assault at once upon the "Syrian superstition," and on the poor, pale, and semi-animate substitutes for it, which Deism has devised.

ADDRESS.

[Two passages enclosed within brackets were omitted in the delivery on account of time.]

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, AND MY YOUNGER FRIENDS ;

Thirty years have passed away since, in consequence of the accidental disability of a worthier person, I was called upon to deliver the Inaugural Address at the opening of this Institution. In other words, the College has now lived through one generation of men.

At the close of such a term, we may suitably look back, to ascertain how far it has fulfilled or disappointed the expectations of its founders. And first I will refer to the hope they entertained, that they would be able to secure for the government of the Institution the services of a series of learned, able, and earnest men. This expectation, I venture to say, has been amply realised in the persons of Mr. Conybeare, of your old friend now present, Dean Howson, and of Mr. Butler.

Further, it was to be an institution having religion for its centre and its base ; and that religion was to be the religion of the Church of England. That the national Church is not in less esteem now than it was then with the nation, the immense increase, alike of her fabrics and her ministrations, may sufficiently show. That those who guide the fortunes of this College do not desire to change the ground they have occupied from the first, can

need no proof on an occasion, when I know from the Principal how much it is desired by them to erect a Chapel within the precincts, in order to the more solemn and effectual celebration of the offices of religion.

But it was also a part of the design, that with religious teaching should be combined the practice of religious liberty; that no compulsory lessons or observances should be imposed, to hinder the enjoyment by the entire youth of Liverpool of the general advantages of the College. How has this portion of the scheme been found to fare? The kindness of your old, respected, and indefatigable Secretary enables me to answer the question. From him I learn that no religious difficulty has impeded the working of the plan; that among the pupils of the College, comprehensive with respect to nationality as well as to communion, there were found a short time back, upon inquiries, Unitarians, Wesleyans, Baptists, Roman Catholics, members of the Greek Church, Presbyterians, and Jews; and that, of the whole number of pupils in the three schools of the College, not less than one-fourth were of religious professions distinct from our own.

Nor have the promoters of the College been disappointed in their hope to furnish the people of Liverpool with easy access to the higher forms of education at their own doors, and to strengthen and enlarge their connection with the old Universities of the land. The seven hundred pupils on its books afford ample proof of the favour of the community; and the number of able men whom it has sent to those Universities indicates the wish of Liverpool to secure for its sons the advantages of what has been commonly termed the higher education.

[There is, however, some difference among us as to the question, what really is the higher education? There are those who think not only that our old methods of

training the young were too exclusive, but that they were fundamentally bad; who would supplant entirely, or expel from the first place in education, the study of man in its various branches, and would substitute for it the study of Nature as it exists otherwise than in man: and again who, in so much as they would admit of the human studies into the course of education, would put aside the ancient for the modern, whether in philosophy, history, or language. The great faults, as I believe, of the ancient educational studies of this country were—first, that they were too narrow; and secondly, that they were too uniform, and did not take heed enough of varieties both of condition and of mind. The consequence was, in the very best men, frequent ignorance of what every cultivated person ought to know; and in all who were unequal to the favoured studies, or whose turn lay in another direction, a great waste of time with little fruit, if not even a confirmed habit of idleness. Therefore it is to be admitted that much wrong was done to the natural sciences. But that wrong is not to be redressed by giving them prospectively more than their due. Such notwithstanding appears to be the desire of some of their professors; and it has been indicated by a practice of claiming for them, in a pre-eminent or even an exclusive sense, the name of science. So that a man who observes and reasons upon plants or animals, the constituent parts of the globe, or of the celestial system, is a man of science; but to observe and reason upon history, upon philosophy in its older sense, or upon theology, establishes no such title, though the very same process of collecting and digesting facts, and of drawing inferences from them, is pursued in the one case and in the other; and though it seems sufficiently absurd to hold that there is a science of the human body, but that there can be no science of the mind or soul. This can surely be no better than a mere fashion of the

hour, and with the hour it must pass away. It is the incidental excess of a reforming movement, and we may hope that while the excess will disappear the reform will remain. Were it, from a mere caprice, to harden into an accepted doctrine, I see not in what it could end, except in a pure materialism.]

But, gentlemen, while freely admitting that what may be termed utilitarian studies were in my early days too much overlooked, that the knowledge of the material universe was sadly neglected, that to many minds only such food was offered as they were wholly unable to digest, and that the upshot was a lamentable waste of power, I claim for the old method of our public schools and colleges that it had merits and advantages, for the loss of which no parade of universality, no increase of mere information, could possibly compensate. It taught with that rigid accuracy, which is the foundation of all really solid learning. It held thoroughness in a few things to be better than show in many. It enthroned in the seat of honour the most masculine studies. I have now passed forty years of life upon an arena of competition as sharp as is to be found anywhere in the world. I have seen all forms of training, practical as well as other, pretty fairly matched with one another; and all descriptions of men, with every variety of natural gifts, bringing up as it were the results of their various modes of education to be tested. The best mode has to struggle with the defects of nature, and the worst will not wholly neutralise her bounties. Here and there, again, you may find a man whose self-training power can dispense with all appliances from without. But these are rare instances indeed.

“Pauci, . . .
Dis geniti, potuere.”*

* Virg. *Æn.* vi. 129.

I speak, however, not of the one but of the million ; and, as among the million, I affirm that there is no training for the conflicts and the toils of life, so far as I have seen, which does greater justice to the receiver of it than the old training of the English public schools and universities. I speak of my own experience and observation, in the sphere in which I have lived ; but probably there are few spheres, though I will not say there are none, in which the whole making of a man is more severely tried. And that my testimony, which is of course limited, may at least be definite, I will add that I speak of such training as it was at Oxford, more, I am sorry to say, than forty years ago.

All this must be a paradox and a stumbling-block to such as think, that the sole or main purpose of education is to stock the mind with knowledge as a shop is stocked with goods, and that the wants of life are to be met like the wants of customers. And doubtless one of the purposes of education is thus to furnish materials for future employment ; but this is its lower, not its higher purpose. The shop takes no benefit, though it may take damage, from the wares which it receives ; but the greatest and best use of the information, which is imported into the mind, is to improve the mind itself. A more instructive comparison may be drawn between education and food. As the main purpose of food is to make the body strong and active, so the main purpose of education is to make the mind solid, elastic, and capable of enduring wear and tear. The studies which are most useful, so far as utility is external to the mind, though they are on that account the most popular, and though they are indispensable,—such, I mean, as reading, writing, arithmetic, modern languages, or geography,—are those which do, not most but least, for our intellectual and moral training. The studies which have it for their main object to act on the composition and capacity of the man,

will, to such as follow them with their whole heart, be found to yield a richer harvest, though the seed may be longer in the ground. Yet I fully admit that the test of a good education is neither abstract nor inflexible. Such an education must take account both of the capacity of the pupil and of the possibilities of his future calling. All I would plead for is, that where there is a choice, the highest shall be preferred. In the words of our most famous living poet—

“It was our duty to have loved the highest;”*

And our duty it must ever remain.

In this institution I trust the prerogatives of “the highest” will always be admitted; and around it there will be marshalled, each in its due order and degree, the numerous and ever multiplying studies, of which every one has an undoubted title to honour in its tendency to embellish or improve the life of man.

But indeed there is much to be said and done about education, besides determining the relative claims, or, as it would now be called, the due co-ordination, of the different kinds of knowledge. Quite apart from these claims, much, my younger friends, and more than you can as yet perhaps fully understand, depends upon the spirit in which those kinds of knowledge are pursued. And this again depends, not upon the incidental advantages of birth or wealth, but upon ourselves. The favours of fortune have both their value and their charm; but there is in a man himself, if he will but open out and cultivate his manhood, that which will be found amply sufficient to supply their place.

Now, as to this important subject, the spirit in which we pursue education, the degree in which we turn our advantages to account, I must say of us here in England that we do not

* Tennyson's ‘Guinevere.’

stand well. Our old Universities, and the schools above the rank of primary, have as a class the most magnificent endowments in the world. I am well aware that this institution is far indeed from being open to such a reproach. It may, however, be doubted whether the amount of these endowments, in England alone, is not equal to their amount on the whole continent of Europe taken together. Matters have mended, and are, I hope, mending. We have good and thorough workers, but not enough of them. The results may be good as far as they go ; but they do not go far. But in truth this "beggarly return," not of empty but of ill-filled boxes, is but one among many indications of a wide-spread vice ; a scepticism in the public mind, of old as well as young, respecting the value of learning and of culture, and a consequent slackness in seeking their attainment. We seem to be spoiled by the very facility and abundance of the opportunities around us. We do not in this matter stand well, as compared with the men of the middle ages, on whom we are too ready to look down. For then, when scholarships and exhibitions, and fellowships and headships, were few, and even before they were known, and long centuries before triposes and classes had been invented, the beauty and the power of Knowledge filled the hearts of men with love, and they went in quest of her, even from distant lands, with ardent devotion, like pilgrims to a favoured shrine.

Again, we do not stand well as compared with Scotland, where, at least, the advantages of education are well understood, and though its honours and rewards are much fewer, yet self-denying labour, and unsparing energy in pursuit of knowledge, are far more common than with us. And once more, we do not stand well as compared with Germany ; where, with means so much more slender as to be quite out of comparison with ours, the results are so much more abundant, that, in the ulterior prosecution of almost every

branch of inquiry, it is to Germany, and the works of the Germans, that the British student must look for assistance. Yet I doubt if it can be said with truth that the German is superior to the Englishman in natural gifts; or that he has greater or even equal perseverance, provided only the Englishman had his heart in the matter. But Germany has two marked advantages: a far greater number of her educated class are really in earnest about their education; and they have not yet learned, as we, I fear, have learned, to undervalue, or even in a great measure to despise, simplicity of life.

Our honours, and our prizes, and our competitive examinations, what for the most part are they, but palliatives applied to neutralise a degenerate indifference, to the existence of which they have been the most conclusive witness? Far be it from me to decry them, or to seek to do away with them. In my own sphere, I have laboured to extend them. They are, however, the medicines of our infirmity, not the ornaments of our health. They supply from without inducements to seek knowledge, which ought to be its own reward. They do something to expel the corroding pest of idleness, that special temptation to a wealthy country, that deadly enemy in all countries to the body and the soul of man. They get us over the first and most difficult stages in the formation of habits, which, in a proportion of cases at least, we may hope will endure, and become in course of time self-acting.

One other claim I must make on behalf of examinations. It is easy to point out their inherent imperfections. Plenty of critics are ready to do this; for in the case of first employments under the State, they are the only tolerably efficient safeguard against gross abuses, and such abuses are never without friends. But from really searching and strong examinations, such as the best of those in our Universities and schools,

there arises at least one great mental benefit, difficult of attainment by any other means. In early youth, while the mind is still naturally supple and elastic, they teach the practice, and they give the power, of concentrating all its force, all its resources, at a given time, upon a given point. What a pitched battle is to the commander of an army, a strong examination is to an earnest student. All his faculties, all his attainments must be on the alert, and wait the word of command; method is tested at the same time with strength; and over the whole movement presence of mind must preside. If, in the course of his after life, he chances to be called to great and concentrated efforts, he will look back with gratitude to those examinations, which more perhaps than any other instrument may have taught him how to make them.

General remissness, gentlemen, is not the besetting sin of our great town communities; least among them all of Liverpool. Nowhere is the pedestrian's pace more rapid than in her streets; nowhere is his countenance more charged with purpose. We live, gentlemen, in a wealth-making age. It may surprise you to hear, but I believe it to be unquestionably true, that more wealth has, in this little island of ours, been accumulated since the commencement of the present century—that is, within the lifetime of many who are still among us—than in all the preceding ages from the time, say, of Julius Cæsar; or any other more remote date you please. And, again, at least as much of this wealth has been stored within the last twenty years, as in the preceding fifty. Liverpool has had even more than her share in this great, this almost portentous activity. Since I knew her, she has scooped four miles of solitary shore into teeming docks; and I am now told she is about to add other miles to these. Fed by the mere overflow of her wealth and energy, the little hamlets that faced her in Cheshire have grown into great and vigorous town districts, larger, I believe, in population than she her-

self was at the commencement of the century. Her opulence, I think, has grown in still greater proportion than her numbers. If we ask, Where is this to end? when will this marvellous process be arrested? when will this great flood-tide begin to ebb? I, for one, know not; I am by no means sure that we are as yet even near high-water. But with the impetuosity of this galloping career, with the wonderful development of such arts of life as bear directly upon enjoyment, there grows up continually a correlative amount of dangers and temptations.

“The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.”*

So it is. The world, in truth, becomes more worldly. It ties us down to earth by more and stronger cords, and to break them requires bolder and more assiduous effort. If we wish to secure our freedom against the perils that environ it, this is not to be done by renouncing business, or by abating energy in its pursuit; it is by balancing that activity with other activities. Yes, it may be replied, we ought to live in the world unseen, as well as in the world we see. And that is doubtless true; and for many, whose opportunities are small, it is sufficient; but for this great community, whose opportunities are large, though true, it is not the whole truth. The entire nature of man is the garden, which is given him to cultivate. We cannot, as a nation or as individuals, be well if we do not provide for the soul as well as the body. But neither can we be well if we do not, according to our means, provide for the mind as well as the soul. That is the principle enshrined and represented in this institution, as it is in every ancient university and college, and as it must be in every institution which aspires

* Wordsworth's ‘Miscellaneous Sonnets,’ No. 33.

to superintend anything that deserves the name of the higher education.

And why should not Liverpool, why should not commerce, afford a field favourable to art, literature, and science, as much as to philanthropy and religion? Half a century ago, the name of this town stood high with respect to mental cultivation. There is nothing in the pursuit of the merchant that ought to preclude the pursuit of mental refinement. The day's work is not so long, nor the anxiety so constant, as to wear out the whole stock of energy that a vigorous English nature can command. In Greece, the State which took its place at the head of literature and philosophy and art was noted for its encouragement of trade. "The best products of Sicily and Italy, of Cyprus and Egypt, of Lydia and Pontus, and every other country, flowed," says Xenophon,* "into the markets of Athens, which ruled the sea." "Hither," says Thucydides,† "come all the products of all the earth;" and Pericles and Alcibiades‡ were not ashamed of superintending extensive manufactories which they owned.

In Florence, the true Athens of modern times, many of the nobles were among the most conspicuous merchants.§ And when Holland took the place of Italy at the head of the commerce of Europe, Art and Science walked in the noble train of Liberty, and the University of Leyden, founded in memory of the heroic efforts of the citizens, took its place, even in that little country, among the very foremost of the universities of Christendom.|| We now speak with deserved respect and gratitude of the learned labours of Germany: but those who observe the German names, and the German

* Xenophon, 'De Rep. Ath.' ii. 7.

† Thuc. ii. 38.

‡ Boeckh, 'Public Economy of Athens,' ii. 63 (Trans. London, 1828).
See also St. John, 'Manners and Customs of Ancient Greece,' iii. 276.

§ Hallam's 'Middle Ages' (8th edit.), vol. i. p. 285.

|| Motley's 'United Netherlands,' vol. iv. ch. liii. p. 526, ed. 1869.

firms, which have established themselves in the commercial communities of England, will readily understand that no country is making advances more marked than theirs in the paths of enterprise.

If then, as I am persuaded, there are among you, my younger friends, those who, though destined to the pursuits which have made this great emporium famous, have in tasting of the cup of knowledge acquired the desire for longer and for deeper draughts; if any of you can say with Virgil of his Muses,

“Quarum sacra fero ingenti percussus amore,”*

there is no reason why he should be discouraged; no reason why he should regard the beginning of business as the end of culture; but let him rather resolve that, though it be but in fragments of his time, he will woo his studies with a lifelong love.

And now forgive me if, using the melancholy privilege of age, and addressing a few words especially to you who are still so young, I seem to assume that in youth you may learn more readily from others some lessons, which you would acquire at greater cost and more slowly for yourselves. To each and all I would say, that God has sent no one of you into the world without a work ready for him to do, and facilities wherewith to do it. What this work is, reflection, or parental guidance, or a kind of instinct, may have told you. If it has not yet been discovered, you have only to follow this one rule: Do your best; try to make the most of all your faculties; “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do,” says the wise man,† and in like manner, whatsoever thy mind findeth to do, “do it with thy might.” You would with justice think meanly of a boy who did not at cricket, or football, or any other sport, try with all his heart to win, or

* Virg. ‘Georgics,’ ii. 476.

† Eccles. ix. 10.

do his part towards winning. Is there not something wrong, I would almost say something base, in our standard of action, of which bone and muscle are thus developed, and most properly developed, to the uttermost, if the mind is allowed to wither and to dwindle for want of manly exercise?

You, who have successfully shown your disposition to excel, I congratulate you on your success. But that success would be a misfortune and a snare to you, if you rested in it; if, to use a homely expression, you went to sleep upon it. It is like the meal which the traveller enjoys upon his way, but the purpose of which is to strengthen him for his further journey. The prize is good, but the efforts which are made to gain the prize are far better. What is most valuable in these competitions, then, the defeated share with the conquerors, nay further yet, one defeated after a hard and bracing struggle gains more in the true work of education, the strengthening of his mind, than some easy winner who canters in without serious exertion. And such defeat, in a mind of true British temper, only strengthens the resolution, which never in the long-run fails, to try yet more manfully next time.

For, do what you will, your life, because it is a human life, will be, and that in many ways, a trial.

“So it is willed above, where will is power.”*

And this world-old truth seems, as the world grows older, to grow more vividly and pointedly true, with the ever-growing strain and noise, and haste and waste, of life; a trial which cannot be escaped by flying from it, but which may be conquered by facing it.

On an occasion like this, I should not have desired, even before those of you, my younger friends, who are on the very threshold of active and responsible manhood, to dwell in a

* From Dante, ‘Inferno,’ iii. 95.

marked manner on the particular trials you will have to encounter. But the incidents of the time are no common incidents; and there is one among them so obtrusive, that youth cannot long enjoy its natural privilege of unacquaintance with the mischief, and so formidable, that it really requires to be forewarned against the danger. I refer to the extraordinary and boastful manifestation, in this age of ours, and especially perhaps in the year which is about to close, of the extremest forms of unbelief.

I am not about to touch upon the differences which distinguish, and partially sever, the Church of England from those communions by which it is surrounded; whether they be of Protestant Nonconformists, or of those who have recently incorporated into the Christian faith what we must suppose they think a bulwark and not a danger to religion, the doctrine of Papal infallibility. For handling controversies of such a class this is not the time, I am not the person, and my office is not the proper office. It is not now only the Christian Church, or only the Holy Scripture, or only Christianity, which is attacked. The disposition is boldly proclaimed to deal alike with root and branch, and to snap utterly the ties which, under the still venerable name of Religion, unite man with the unseen world, and lighten the struggles and the woes of life by the hope of a better land.

[These things are done as the professed results, and the newest triumphs, of Modern Thought and Modern Science; but I believe that neither Science nor Thought is responsible, any more than Liberty is responsible, for the misdeeds committed in their names. Upon the ground of what is termed evolution, God is relieved of the labour of creation; in the name of unchangeable laws, He is discharged from governing the world; and His function of judgment is also dispensed with, as justice and benevolence are held to forbid that men should hereafter be called to strict account for actions,

which under these unchangeable laws they may have committed. But these are only the initial stages of the process. Next, we are introduced to the doctrine of the Absolute and the Unconditioned ; and, under the authority of these phrases (to which, and many other phrases, in their proper places, I have no objection) we are instructed that we can know nothing about God, and therefore can have no practical relations with Him. One writer, or, as it is now termed thinker, announces with pleasure that he has found the means of reconciling Religion and Science. The mode is in principle most equitable. He divides the field of thought between them. To Science he awards all that of which we know, or may know, something ; to Religion he leaves a far wider domain,—that of which we know, and can know, nothing.* This sounds like jest, but it is melancholy earnest ; and I doubt whether any such noxious crop has been gathered in such rank abundance from the press of England in any former year of our literary history as in this present year of our redemption, eighteen hundred and seventy-two.]

I will not, on this occasion, pain and weary you with a multitude of details. I will only refer by name to one who is not a British writer—to the learned German, Dr. Strauss. He is a man of far wider fame than any British writer who marches under the same banner ; and I mention him with the respect which is justly due, not only to his ability, but to the straightforward earnestness, and to the fairness and mildness towards antagonists in argument, with which, so far as I have had the opportunity of judging him from his present or former works, he pursues his ill-starred and hopeless enterprise.

He has published, during the present year, a volume entitled ‘The Old Belief and the New.’† In his Intro-

* See Illustrative Passages, A.

† ‘Der alte und der neue Glaube : ein Bekenntniss.’ Von David Friedrich Strauss. 2te Auflage. Leipzig, 1872.

duction, he frankly raises the question whether, considering the progress which culture has now made, there is any longer occasion to maintain religious worship* in any form whatever. Why, he asks, on behalf of a party in Germany, for which he speaks, and for which he claims that it answers most fully to the state of Modern Thought, should there be a separate religious society at all, when we have already provision made for all men in the State, the School, Science, and Fine Art? In his First Chapter he puts the question, "Are we still Christians?"† and, after a detailed examination, he concludes,—always speaking on behalf of Modern Thought,—that if we wish our yea to be yea and our nay nay,—if we are to think and speak our thoughts as honourable upright men, we must reply that we are Christians no longer.‡ This question and answer, however, he observes are insufficient. The essential and fundamental inquiry is, whether we are or are not still to have a Religion? §

To this inquiry he devotes his Second Chapter. In this Second Chapter, he finds that there is no personal God; || there is no future state: the dead live in the recollection of survivors: this is enough for them.¶ After this he has little difficulty in answering the question he has put. All religious worship ought to be abolished.** The very name of "Divine Service" is an indignity to man. Therefore, in the sense in which religion has been heretofore understood, his answer is that we ought to have no religion any more. But proceeding, as he always does, with commendable frankness, he admits that he ought to fill with something the void which he has made. This he accordingly proceeds to do. Instead of God, he offers to us the All, or Universum.†† This All or Universum possesses, he tells us, neither consciousness

* P. 7.

† P. 12 and chap. i.

‡ P. 94.

§ Chap. ii. p. 95.

|| See Illustrative Passages, B.

¶ P. 372.

** P. 144.

†† P. 146.

nor reason. But it presents to us order and law. He thinks it fitted, therefore, to be the object of a new and true piety, which he claims for his *Universum*, as the devout of the old style did for their God. If any one repudiates this doctrine, to Dr. Strauss's reason, the repudiation is absurdity, and to his feelings blasphemy.*

These are not the ravings of a maniac; nor are they the mere dreams of an imaginative high-wrought enthusiast such as Comte† appears to have been; they are the grave conclusions, after elaborate reasoning, of a learned, a calm, and, so far as form is concerned, a sober-minded man, who in this very year has been commended to us, in England, by another Apostle of Modern Thought as one of the men to whose guidance we ought, if we are wise, to submit ourselves in matter of religious belief.‡

I would not, gentlemen, even if I had the capacity and the time, make an attempt from this place to confute these astonishing assertions; for I have no fear that by their exhibition they will beguile or attract you. Neither do I search for the hard names of controversy to describe them; for they best describe themselves. Neither can I profess to feel an unmixed regret at their being forced, thus eagerly and thus early, into notice; because it is to be hoped that they will cause a shock and a reaction, and will compel many, who may have too lightly valued the inheritance so dearly bought for them, and may have entered upon dangerous paths, to consider, while there is yet time, whither those paths will lead them. In no part of his writings, perhaps, has Strauss been so effective, as where he assails the inconsistency of those who adopt his premises, but decline to follow him to their conclusions. Suffice it

* P. 146.

† Illustrative Passages, C.

‡ Willis's 'Life of Spinoza,' p. 26, note. See Illustrative Passages, D.

to say, these opinions are by no means a merely German brood;* there are many writers of kindred sympathies in England, and some of as outspoken courage. But, in preparing yourselves for the combat of life, I beg you to take this also into your account, that the spirit of denial is abroad, and that it has challenged all Religion, but especially the Religion we profess, to the combat of life and death.

But I venture to offer you a few suggestions, in the hope that they may not be wholly without their use.

You will hear in your after-life much of the duty and delight of following free thought; and in truth the man, who does not value the freedom of his thoughts, deserves to be described as Homer describes the slave; he is but half a man.† Saint Paul, I suppose, was a teacher of free thought, when he bade his converts to prove all things;‡ but it seems he went terribly astray when he proceeded to bid them “hold fast that which is good;” for he evidently assumed that there was something by which they could hold fast. And so he bade Timothy keep that which was committed to his charge;§ and another Apostle has instructed us to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”|| But the free thought, of which we now hear so much, seems too often to mean thought roving and vagrant more than free; like Delos, in the ancient legend, drifting on the seas of Greece, without a root, a direction, or a home.

Again, you will hear incessantly of the advancement of the present age, and of the backwardness of those which have gone before it. And truly it has been a wonderful age; but let us not exaggerate. It has been, and it is, an age of immense mental, as well as material activity; it

* See Illustrative Passages, E. † Odyss. x. 322. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 21.
 § 1 Tim. vi. 20. || Jude 3.

is by no means an age abounding in minds of the first order, in those whom time establishes as the great immortal guides and teachers of mankind. It has tapped, as it were, and made disposable for man, vast natural forces; but the mental power employed is not to be measured by the mere size of the results. To perfect that wonder of travel, the locomotive, has perhaps not required the expenditure of more mental strength and application, than to perfect that wonder of music, the violin. In the material sphere, the achievements of the age are splendid and unmingled. In the social sphere, they are great and noble; but seem ever to be confronted by a succession of new problems, which almost defy solution. In the sphere of pure intellect, I doubt whether posterity will rate us as highly as we rate ourselves. But that which I most wish to observe is this, that it is an insufferable arrogance in the men of any age to assume what I may call airs of unmeasured superiority over former ages. God, who cares for us, cared for them also. In the goods of this world we may advance by strides; but it is by steps only and not strides, and by slow and not always steady steps, that all durable improvement of man, in the higher ranges of his being, is alone to be effected.

Again, my friends, you will hear much to the effect that the divisions among Christians render it impossible to say what Christianity is, and so destroy all certainty as to what is the true religion. But if the divisions among Christians are remarkable, not less so is their unity in the greatest doctrines that they hold. Well-nigh fifteen hundred years—years of a more sustained activity than the world had ever before seen—have passed away, since the great controversies concerning the Deity and the Person of the Redeemer were, after a long agony, determined. As before that time in a manner less defined, but adequate for their day, so ever since that time, amid all chance and change, more, aye

many more, than ninety-nine in every hundred Christians have with one voice confessed the Deity and Incarnation of our Lord as the cardinal and central truths of our Religion. Surely there is some comfort here, some sense of brotherhood; some glory due to the past, some hope for the times that are to come.

On one, and only one, more of the favourite fallacies of the day I will yet presume to touch. It is the opinion and the boast of some that man is not responsible for his belief. Lord Brougham was at one time stated to have given utterance to this opinion. Whether truly, I do not remember; but this I know, it was my privilege to hear from his own lips the needful and due limitation of that proposition. "Man," he said, "is not responsible to man for his belief." But as before God, one and the same law applies to opinions and to acts; or rather to inward and to outward acts; for opinions are inward acts. Many a wrong opinion may be guiltless because formed in ignorance, and because that ignorance may not be our fault. But who shall presume to say that there is no mercy for wrong actions also, when they, too, have been due to ignorance, and that ignorance has not been guilty? The question is not whether judgments and actions are in the same *degree* influenced by the condition of the moral motives.* It is a question of the principle, on which judgment is to be based.

If it is undeniable that self-love and passion have an influence upon both, then, so far as that influence goes, for both we must be prepared to answer. Should we, in common life, ask a body of swindlers for an opinion upon swindling? or of gamblers for an opinion upon gambling? or of misers upon bounty? And if, in matters of religion, we allow pride and perverseness to raise a cloud between us and the truth

* See Illustrative Passages, F.

so that we see it not, the false opinion that we form is but the index of that perverseness and that pride, and both for them, and for it as their offspring, we shall be justly held responsible. Who may be the persons, upon whom this responsibility will fall, it is not ours to judge. These laws are given to us, not to apply presumptuously to others; it is enough if we enforce them honestly against ourselves.

Next to a Christian life, my friends, you will find your best defence against reckless novelty of speculation in sobriety of temper, and in sound intellectual habits. Be slow to stir inquiries, which you do not mean patiently to pursue to their proper end. Be not afraid oftentimes to suspend your judgment; or to feel and admit to yourselves how narrow are the bounds of knowledge. Do not too readily assume that to us have been opened royal roads to truth, which were heretofore hidden from the whole family of man; for the opening of such roads would not be so much in favour, as caprice. If it is bad to yield a blind submission to authority, it is not less an error to deny to it its reasonable weight. Eschewing a servile adherence to the past, regard it with reverence and gratitude; and accept its accumulations, alike in the inward and in the outward spheres, as the patrimony, which it is your part in life both to preserve and to improve.

A vote of thanks to Mr. Gladstone for the Address having been carried,

MR. GLADSTONE, in reply, said:—Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, and my Friends of the College, I acknowledge with sincere gratitude the thanks you have been good enough to offer in a manner so pleasing to me; and I feel that they derive an additional value, not only from the kind remarks of the chairman, and his reference to former times, but also from the circumstance that the proposal was seconded by one

whose name stands so high upon the roll of the benefactors of this institution as our respected friend the Dean of Chester. I can truly declare, gentlemen, that when the Principal was good enough to propose to me that I should undertake this office, I did not look upon it as a matter of mere compliment or ceremony, but as one of very serious duty ; and in that light it is that I have approached it, and have endeavoured to perform it. Further, I must say that it is always a source of pleasure to me to be called upon to perform, or to feel myself able to perform—which is not always the case—some act of public duty in Liverpool. I find cause for gratification in everything which refreshes my memory of the place, and strengthens my connection with it. It is not unnatural that I should feel a strong interest in Liverpool, where I have continually before me the recollection of my father, and where I also rejoice to know the presence of my Brother ; nor is there any portion of the proceedings of this day which is more gratifying to my feelings than the manner in which reference has been made to my Brother, and the warmth of feeling with which that reference has been received. I trust that the connection between Liverpool and our family will long continue. Liverpool is, after all, but a very young place, when considered as the seat of a great community ; but I see here some whose names have been well known in its history almost ever since it began to have one ; and I hope that, as time goes on, Liverpool will have its old families like other places, famous for commerce in other times and countries, and like other districts of this country now. I know not why commerce in England should not have its old families, rejoicing to be connected with commerce from generation to generation. It has been so in other countries : I trust it will be so in this country. I think it a subject of sorrow, and almost a scandal, when those families, which have either acquired or

recovered station and opulence through commerce turn their backs upon it, and seem to be ashamed of it. It certainly is not so with my Brother or with me. His sons are treading in his steps, and one of my sons, I rejoice to say, is treading in the steps of my Father and my Brother. I hope, therefore, gentlemen, you will see that we are not unfaithful to the cause, and to the place with which we have been so long familiar. In the task I have discharged to-day, I have not studied the arts of flattery. I have endeavoured to practise that plain speaking which I know is dear to Englishmen, and I trust it will be given to many of you whom I see now before me upon the threshold of their life, to become an ornament and an honour to this place, and to give a good practical demonstration to the world that the pursuit of commerce and the interests of human cultivation are not alien from one another, but are, on the contrary, harmoniously allied. (Loud applause.)

ILLUSTRATIVE PASSAGES.

A.—p. 23.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE.

My reference is to Mr. Herbert Spencer. See his 'First Principles,' and especially the chapter on the "Reconciliation of Science and Religion." It is needless to cite particular passages. It would be difficult to mistake its meaning; for it is written with great ability and clearness, as well as with every indication of sincerity. Still it vividly recalls to mind an old story of the man who, wishing to be rid of one who was in his house, said, "Sir, there are two sides to my house, and we will divide them; you shall take the outside."

I believe Mr. Spencer has been described in one of our daily journals as the first thinker of the age.

B.—p. 24.

THE RECENT WORK OF DR. STRAUSS.

These passages are given as specimens of the work of Dr. Strauss, rather than as supplying the body of proof of the propositions set forth in the text of the Address; and I would remind the reader that Dr. Strauss may protest against being bound by a rendering into another language for which he is not responsible, although I do not think any defects in the translation will be found to affect the substance.

The "We" of Dr. Strauss in this work is not according to the common editorial use of the pronoun, but is meant, as I understand it, to mark the work throughout as the manifesto of a party.

I.

THE RESURRECTION.

“Seldom has an incredible occurrence been worse testified; never has one ill testified been intrinsically more incredible. I have, in my ‘Life of Jesus,’ appropriated to this subject a searching scrutiny, which I will not here repeat. The upshot of it alone I hold it to be my duty, as well as my right, to declare without any sort of reserve. Viewed historically, that is to say, when the prodigious results of this belief are taken together with its total want of foundation, the narrative of the Resurrection of Jesus can only be described as a world-wide humbug (*welthistorischer Humbug*).”—p. 79.

II.

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

“Why is it, then, that we ought to have no worship in future? Because we have broken loose from the other constituent part of Religion, which is also the untrue and, in relation to the sentiment of independence, the more ignoble part of it—namely, the desire and the idea that, through our worship, we may be enabled to extract something from our God. We need only take the expression ‘Divine Service,’ and acquire a perception of the grovelling anthropopathism it involves, in order to perceive how and for what reason anything of that kind is no longer admissible from our point of view.”—p. 144.

III.

PIETY TOWARDS THE UNIVERSUM.

“We have been seeking to determine, whether our point of view, from which the law-governed All, full of life and intelligence, is the summit of thought (*die höchste Idee*), can still be called a religious point of view: and we have animadverted upon Schopenhauer, who loses no opportunity of

flying in the face of this which is our Idea. As I have said, such outbreaks impress our understanding as absurdities ; to our feelings, they are blasphemies. It appears to us rash and reckless, on the part of a mere human individual, so boldly to set himself up against the All, out of which he grows, and from which he has the morsel of intelligence that he misuses. We see in this an abnegation of that feeling of dependence, which we admit to belong to all men. We demand the same Piety towards our Universum, as the devout man of the old fashion did for his God.”—p. 146.

IV.

THE BIBLE.

“Men think they understand the Bible, because they are habituated to not understanding it. Moreover, the modern reader brings to it as much edifying force as he derives from it. Not even to mention books like the Revelation of John, and most of the Prophets of the Old Testament, surely it is not meant to say that Lessing’s ‘Nathan,’ or Goethe’s ‘Hermann und Dorothea,’ is harder to understand, or contains fewer “saving truths,” fewer golden sayings, than an Epistle of Paul, or a discourse of Christ according to John.”—p. 299.

V.

THE FUTURE STATE.

“As regards the substitute, which our view of things offers for the Church’s belief in immortality, the reader may perhaps expect from me a very lengthened explanation, but will have to content himself with a very short one. He who in this point cannot practise self-help, is not yet ready for our standing-point. He for whom, on the one hand, it is not enough to be allowed to vitalise within himself the everlasting ideas of the Universum, and of the course of development (*Entwicklungsgang*), and the destiny, appointed for

humanity; he who knows not how to create within himself, for the dead whom he loves and honours, a continuation of life and action in its finest form (*das schönste Fortleben und Fortwirken*); he in whom, together with exertion for his family, with labour in his calling, with contribution to the welfare of his nation, as well as to the good of his fellow-men at large, and with enjoyment of the Beautiful in Nature and Art—he, I say, in whom, with all this there does not on the other hand arise the consciousness, that he himself can only be called to be a temporary partner in it all; he who cannot prevail upon himself, finally, to bid his adieu to life with thankfulness for having been permitted for a time to act, to enjoy, and also to suffer in unison with all this, and at the same time with a devout sense of liberation from what, in the long-run is, after all, but exhausting day-labour; such a man, I say, we must remit to Moses and the Prophets; who, to boot, knew nothing of an immortal life, yet Moses and the Prophets still they were.”—p. 372.

(I have not ventured to tamper with the syntax of this passage.)

C.—p. 25.

THE SYSTEM OF COMTE.

Having given Comte credit for imagination, I must confess that, I did not suppose him to be of “imagination all compact,”* but rather of imagination all diffuse. I had in view his width of sympathies and disposition to sympathise, his avowed regard for Veneration, his priesthood, his incorporation of the priestly vocation with the function of the poet, his calendar, and his woman-worship, as he has developed them in his ‘Catechism of Positivism’ [I refer to the English translation by Mr. Congreve], which he put forth as a sum-

* ‘Midsummer Night’s Dream,’ v. 1.

mary of his previously published volumes, and an anticipation of those which were to follow. (Preface, pp. 12, 37.) Strauss appears to me to be indebted, in a certain degree, to Comte, but to be rather shy of owning the acquaintance.

D.—p. 25.

OUR RELIGIOUS GUIDES.

I quote this passage from Willis's 'Life of Spinoza,' p. 26, note:—

"An entirely truthful and authoritative interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures is an imperative want of the age in which we live, and has now become the first condition required to enable the world to escape from the slough of superstition on the one hand, and irreligiousness on the other, in which it is helplessly sunk, and is sinking more and more deeply every day, despite the well-meant efforts of the pious laity and zealous ministry of all denominations. We have set *authoritative* beside *truthful* in the sentence above, for we are possessed of even more than one perfectly truthful and exhaustive, but of no authoritative interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures and Greek Testament; neither can the world at large have any such, until the hierarchies of the Christian Churches agree to associate themselves with Spinoza, Semler, Lessing, De Wette, Ewald, Strauss, Baur, Kuenen, Keim, Renan, and Colenso—critics and scholars all, men of noble lives, clear heads, and pious souls, who, from the fulness of their hearts and depths of their understandings, have spoken to their fellow-men in terms which all might understand, but which ignorance, superstition, and false direction prevent them from apprehending in their inappreciable worth and importance. Authority would indeed seem indispensable to the mass of mankind; but no holy reunion of cultivated men for such a purpose is possible, unless it be based on acknowledgment of the common father-

hood of God, and recognise the revelation He makes of His being and attributes for all time, in no mere spoken words or written records, but in the mind of man, the order of the universe, and the great laws that, by His fiat, rule it necessarily, changelessly, and everlastingly."

E.—p. 26.

I have made a statement that these ideas are not a mere German brood; though I fear that we owe much of their seed to Germany, as France owed to England the seed of her great Voltairian movement, so far as it was a movement grounded in the region of thought. This statement, as it is given in the text, I will support only by extracts from a single writer, Mr. Winwood Reade. They are taken from his 'Martyrdom of Man.' The three first bear upon creed. I quote the fourth, with reference to the last of the three inventions he desires and anticipates, as an instance of what seems to me a want of sobriety of mind, exhibited in a region where it will be better appreciated than if it bore directly upon matters of religion.

It would have been easy to quote from other writers. Perhaps, in sparing myself that task, I make the reference to Mr. Reade more invidious. But my purpose is information, not reproach. Happily we are not now as in the days of Edward VI., when Philpot, who had himself taken what were deemed considerable liberties with the established religion, spat in the face of an Arian, and defending himself in print, said: "I would I had a quantity of spittle to spatle on them."

I must add that Mr. Reade writes with an ability amply sufficient to defend him from wrong.

I.

"When the faith in a personal God is extinguished; when prayer and praise are no longer to be heard; when the

belief is universal that with the body dies the soul; then the false morals of theology will no longer lead the human mind astray.”—‘The Martyrdom of Man,’ p. 535.

II.

“We teach that the soul is immortal; we teach that there is a future life; we teach that there is a Heaven in the ages far away; but not for us single corpuscles, not for us dots of animated jelly, but for the One of whom we are the elements, and who though we perish never dies.”—p. 537.

III.

“God is so great that He does not deign to have personal relations with us human atoms that are called men. Those who desire to worship their Creator must worship Him through mankind. Such, it is plain, is the scheme of Nature.”—p. 537.

IV.

“Three inventions, which perhaps may long be delayed, but which possibly are near at hand, will give to this overcrowded island the prosperous conditions of the United States. The first is the discovery of a motive force which will take the place of steam, with its cumbrous fuel of oil and coal; secondly, the invention of aerial locomotion, which will transport labour at a trifling cost of money and of time, to any part of the planet, and which, by annihilating distance, will speedily extinguish national distinctions; and thirdly, the manufacture of flesh and flour from the elements, by a chemical process in the laboratory similar to that which is now performed within the bodies of the animals and plants.”—p. 513.

F.—p. 28.

AUTHORITY IN ITS RELATION TO REASON.

The general subject of Authority, and its place not as an antagonist of Reason, but as an instrument of Reason for the attainment of Truth, is very ably handled in the opening chapters of the work of Sir George C. Lewis, ‘On the Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion.’

Though I am not able to follow him in every one of his applications of the principle, I could wish his reasonings were better known to the world than, unfortunately, they can now be, from the extreme scarcity of the work.

He remarks, in p. 35, “It is commonly said that the belief is independent of the will,” and that no man can change it “by merely wishing it to be otherwise.” But “the operation of a personal interest may cause a man insensibly to adopt *préjudices* or partial and unexamined opinions.” In p. 38 he adds, “Napoleon affords a striking instance of the corruption of the judgment in consequence of the misdirection of the moral sentiments.”





